

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH LIEUTENANT GENERAL CHARLES E. STENNER, JR., CHIEF OF THE AIR FORCE RESERVE AND COMMANDER OF THE AIR FORCE RESERVE COMMAND, VIA TELECONFERENCE SUBJECT: AIR FORCE RESERVE COMMAND OPERATIONS IN SUPPORT OF OPERATION UNIFIED RESPONSE-HAITI TIME: 3:00 P.M. EST DATE: TUESDAY, JANUARY 19, 2010

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LIEUTENANT JENNIFER CRAGG (Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs): So, without further ado, I want to welcome you all to the Department of Defense's "Bloggers Roundtable" for Tuesday, January 19, 2010. My name is Lieutenant Jennifer Cragg, with the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, and I'll be moderating the call today. Just so I can go on, I can hear someone typing, so if you can put your phone on mute, that would be great. Thank you. A note to the bloggers and online journalists on the call, please clearly state the name and organization you're with prior to asking your questions.

And, with that, I'd like to introduce the guest today. His name is Lt. Gen. Charles Stenner, Jr. He's the chief of the Air Force Reserve, and commander of the Air Force Reserve Command. He's going to be discussing the Air Force Reserves command operations to support Operation Unified Response-Haiti. Without further ado, I'm going to turn it over to the General.

If you like to start with an opening statement, and we'll go right into questions. Sir, the floor is yours.

GEN. STENNER: Thank you very much. And I will just make a very brief opening statement, and I appreciate everybody's attention and time today.

As you know, the country of Haiti was rocked by a severe earthquake on January the 12th, and it caused significant damage and it left countless people dead, injured and homeless. I've got to tell you that all of our thoughts and prayers -- I know all of yours as well, are with the Haitian people and all of those affected by this devastating earthquake.

Haiti does need significant humanitarian assistance, to include medical care and relief supplies. The United States has certainly

committed itself to provide as much assistance as possible to this relief effort. President Obama has stated the U.S. will support the government and people of Haiti. The Department of State is, in fact, the lead agency for coordinating all of the relief efforts. U.S. Southern Command, however, is the lead military organization and is coordinating the Department of Defense effort.

I'll tell you that the Air Force Reserve Command and the other Air Force major commands through the United States Southern Command, as well as those assets tasked to provide airlift support -- the United States Transportation Command, and is committed to providing forces and assets to support the humanitarian relief efforts. One of the major Air Force Reserve contributions is airlift, and we perform that with a fleet of aircraft, including the C-5, C-17 and the C-130.

As of this date and this time, Reserve aircrews have flown 57 missions in support of Operation Unified Response, and the pace of activity is very likely to increase in the weeks and days to come. The Reserve aircraft are transporting people, supplies and equipment to staging areas and into the country of Haiti, and they're bringing American citizens home as well.

I'll tell you that another major contribution is the use of Homestead Air Reserve Base as a secondary aerial port of embarkation, Charleston being the primary. However, because of its such strategic location that we have down there at Homestead, it does play a vital role, both in our nation's defense, with an airborne -- or an alert mission, as well as, because of the location, it's very easy to react quickly to emergencies from that site. I think we anticipate a significant and continuing role for Homestead Air Reserve Base as this mission evolves. And with that, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir, very much.

We're going to go to the first blogger, with Jim.

Jim, please go ahead.

(Pause.)

Jim?

Q General, Jim Dolbow, with the U.S. Naval Institute Blog.

What are your biggest readiness challenges?

GEN. STENNER: Our biggest readiness challenges are -- it's probably sustaining and maintaining the tempo that we have going on right now, with the Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom in the AOR, while at the same time sustaining and training and maintaining that readiness in all of the different mission sets that we have, because the tempo does require our folks to deploy on a frequent, and sustained and predictable basis.

We are, in fact, part of that three-component Air Force, and ready and able to do that, but when we bring them back we, of course, have to do some recurrences, and those kinds of things. So the biggest challenge right now we have is sustaining the tempo -- which we can do as long as it's predictable, and retraining and becoming recurrent when we get home.

Q Do you have any, like, C-5s sitting on the runway, broken and full of supplies?

GEN. STENNER: No, we don't. And if any of them did break, they would be likely spared very quickly. So everything that we have, in my mind, has been delivered to Homestead. We had a significant effort down there at Homestead to do the throughput required.

We did put things on the ramp, waiting for the airport in Haiti to be able to accept the airplanes, and that has ramped up very nicely. So we have a very good flow going through there right now, and what had come to Homestead in preparation for that flow has been loaded and sent. So it is moving very smoothly through Homestead and on down to Port-au-Prince.

Q Thank you, General.

GEN. STENNER: You bet.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, Jim. Thank you, sir.

Dale, please go ahead.

Q Good afternoon, General. This is Dale Kissinger from MilitaryAvenue.com. GEN. STENNER: Howdy.

Q And just for your information, I served in the REO staff for two years while assigned at the Pentagon as an active-duty guy helping the Reserves. So I bring a lot of support for the Reserves, and I just would like to find out a little bit more information about how you're supporting, besides airlift. I did fly the C-17 -- a great airplane.

But are you considering activating any medical units, or any other support, like aerial port; anything coming out of the Reserves that the active duty can't provide?

GEN. STENNER: I'll tell you what, we are, in fact, a three-component Air Force, as you know. And you're living proof that it takes all three of them -- the active duty, the Reserve and the Guard to do the missions we do right now. And the three-component Air Force is, in fact, part of the joint fight going on right now, and all our joint partners are heavily engaged. And as you know, SOUTHCOM is the point of entry for us, as far as command-and-control, and as far as any of the requests for support.

Right now airlift and mobility fleet kinds of missions have been the primary. We've had requests for aeromedical evac kinds of folks going into MacDill, because that will become a staging area, I think, soon for the aeromedical mission. We have had 158 other kinds of folks deployed in a variety of mission sets, which would include, actually, Public Affairs in a couple of places; as well as our security forces; some EPLOs, our emergency liaison officers that are here in-country. They aren't going down-range, but they are here in support of NORTHCOM, as we make sure that everything that goes in and comes out of the country is managed appropriately as well.

So we've had a variety of mission sets that we've been asked to do, in conjunction with the over 580 Air Force personnel, active Guard and Reserve, that are part of that larger joint fight. And there are several thousand of those across the board in all the different missions that are participating right now.

Q Thank you very much. LT. CRAGG: Thank you, Dale.

Thank you, sir.

Chuck, please go ahead.

Q Hello, sir. Chuck Simmins from America's North Shore Journal.

GEN. STENNER: Howdy.

Q Hi. The runway at Port-au-Prince is just a tad over 9,000 feet. You having any trouble getting the C-17s and, in particular, the C-5s in there?

GEN. STENNER: Not to my knowledge. And all of those airplanes are very capable of getting into those kinds of runways right there.

And I'll tell you that the effort to ramp-up the throughput and the input to Port-au-Prince has been marvelous, from my perspective. We've had our Special Ops team on the ground there -- Air Force Special Ops, not a Reserve team, but an Air Force Special Ops team that ensured that that runway was operating within 20 minutes of them getting on the ground. We are certainly taking care of the security there, as a joint force. And the runway is sufficient to handle any of the airplanes we have with the cargo that we're taking in there.

Q All right.

And I wanted to ask about Homestead. Given its status to this point, is it short of any equipment or materials that would normally be on an active-duty base, that you're having to make up?

GEN. STENNER: Well, we do. But that's not as a -- and that's not as a result of not having it available. The fact of the matter is that Homestead runs 24/7-365 as an alert facility. We also have been, and continue to be, a staging base for the Southern Command because of

proximity to the command, and the fact that (SAC/SOC ?) South has a headquarters on that installation.

We've got quite a few mobility planes that work through Homestead on a regular basis, and we are adequately provisioned for the maximum operating aircraft on the ground of two. We had to ramp that up to four, and we can continue to ramp it up. And as you ramp up the pace of the effort, the additional equipment required to do that has been flowing in very regularly. We don't lack anything, based on the requirement that has been articulated, that is in addition to what we normally do on a daily basis.

So we aren't set up to do this every day, but when it happens, the contingency plans that are there have been in place. And our logisticians, and our maintenance folks, and our operators and our command-and-control folks have all responded. And our Southern Command and SOUTHAF command-and-control chain requested additional forces and materiel, and it's all there in a very timely manner. So we're very happy with the status of the base right now.

Q Great. Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, Chuck.

Thank you, sir.

David, next.

Q Hi, sir. It's David Axe with Warisboring.com. Thanks for talking to us today.

GEN. STENNER: You bet.

Q So, looking ahead, if the Haiti relief effort turns into a Berlin Airlift-style sustained campaign, what might the challenges be for keeping this operation going, from your point of view -- keeping this operation going over weeks or months?

GEN. STENNER: Right. I'll tell you, that certainly does look like a possibility, doesn't it -- with the devastation that's down there. But we're prepared for the long haul. And, as a matter of fact, the president did, in fact, sign an executive order on the 16th that authorized a presidential call-up of an additional couple of hundred thousand Reserve troops. So we are prepared, if it goes to long-term, to use that kind of authority to bring the right amount of folks, and the right specialties down to Homestead on a frequent and rotational basis to continue the operations for the foreseeable future.

That's not unlike how we're doing business right now as a three-component Air Force in OEF and OIF in the AOR. We're doing those kinds of rotational things through what we call our "Air Expeditionary Force construct," and we will take the same approach to the kinds of things that need to go on here, as a result of any joint task force or Southern Command requests, and the requirements that will go into

movement to and from the relief effort down in Port-au-Prince, that Homestead is perfectly suited for with that strategic location.

Q Great. Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, David. Thank you, sir.

Olivi -- Livi (ph) -- can't say your last -- I can't say your first name. Please go ahead.

Q Hi. This is Olivia Hanson with the ASP News Agency. I just -- GEN. STENNER: Hi.

Q Hi. I just wanted to see -- this morning, Major General Allyn talked to us about the plan to open the airstrip in Jacmel in San Isidro, and I just wanted to see if you could tell us what's the capacity of those airstrips and if there are any plans to open any other airstrips in the area. And then lastly, what's the status on the implementation of the agreement with the U.N. to prioritize the incoming humanitarian aid at the Sohopahn (ph) Airport?

GEN. STENNER: You have probably asked me a question that I am not qualified to answer.

I do know that San Isidro and Jacinto (ph) are being opened but you'd have to ask that question of the hierarchy and that would be SOUTHAF or SOUTHCOM headquarters as to the status at this point in time. But I know overall we are looking for additional points of entry for additional airstrips and I do know that that will be very much in line with some of the other kinds of things we're looking at such as precision airdrop and the possibilities of perhaps having distribution points that are more in country as opposed to at the airfields.

And as far as the U.N. prioritization, the prioritization right now as far as American citizens coming out has been dictated by Southern Command and they have, in fact, also given us pretty much direct -- clear direction that says we don't leave the country with any seats open. So we're bringing all of those that need to come back home to the United States, and as far as the status of agreements with the U.N. I am not qualified to answer that one. And as far as the status of the opening of the airbase you'd need to probably get a hold of the public affairs folks at SOUTHCOM.

Q Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, Olivia. Paul, please go ahead.

Q Yeah. Hi, General. This is Paul Bove from Air Force Public Affairs Agency.

GEN. STENNER: Hi.

Q Hi. Just a quick question, and this might fall under one of those things like the previous question -- that you don't know or

cannot answer. Have you seen any challenges working with the Haitian government with them still maintaining sovereignty over the airstrip?

GEN. STENNER: Yeah. I don't have any challenges personally nor with our Homestead operation. The folks on the ground there in Port-au-Prince and in Haiti would be best qualified to answer that. But I do know that we work very hard to ensure that those folks who are, in fact, part of the operation -- those Haitian nationals and the Haitian government pieces that are running the airfield -- we are currently working with them in the operation down there to ensure that they have sovereignty with their airfield and I know the Department of State and the USAID are leading those efforts as we work through the through-put down in Port-au-Prince and other places.

Q Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Okay. We have time to go around the horn just one more time real quick. We have about 14 minutes left. So Jim, do you have any follow-on questions?

Q Yes. General, Jim Davo again with the U.S. Naval Institute blog.

GEN. STENNER: Yes.

Q The military -- amateur military historian in me wants to ask you, when did you guys ramp up? I mean, how soon after the earthquake strike -- struck did you like get the word to ramp up and go down range?

GEN. STENNER: I'll tell you, it was -- it's almost immediate and that is a -- that is not an exaggeration. When that kind of news comes out on the TV and the radio the phone starts ringing because people understand and know that there's going to be a requirement, and our citizen airmen are quick to call their supervisors and those supervisors and the wings that we have our folks working in call the headquarters right here at Robins Air Force Base -- Air Force Reserve Command Headquarters -- and start collecting a list of those folks who are volunteering and are making their services available.

We have medical folks. We have the aerial porters. We have these -- the base-operating support folks like security forces and civil engineers. Because history has proven that when these kinds of things happen the United States will respond with some help regardless of where it is in this world and we're the -- probably the only ones that can do that with all the services that we have. So when you look at the kinds of things that have happened with the recent hurricanes, when you look at the relief efforts in the Caribbean that have happened over the last decade or so, our folks know and call immediately to put their name on a list. And then we start looking at what is it that Southern Command needs, what kind of requests come in, and we're very able to respond quickly to any and all of those assist efforts.

Q Thank you, General.

LT. CRAGG: Thanks, Jim. Thanks, sir.

Dale, please go ahead.

Q General, you have -- (inaudible) -- up to this point. I was wondering if you anticipate the presidential call-up authority being used in the near future, and if so, when. GEN. STENNER: That's a very good question and that's something that we are looking into right now with all our Reserve component sister services and trying to understand the authority is there, how best to use that, because it can't be used in isolation. We still have all of our seven Reserve components and all of our services have requirements around the world.

So the thing we can do right now best is sit back and take a look at it holistically. How are we postured to support OEF and continue to support OEF and OIF? And then how do I insert whatever requirements will be coming down the road here into that flow -- into that rotation -- and how do we ensure that we aren't redundant with other -- without our services. And it won't take us long. We've got all the volunteers we need right now. Once we figure out the sustainment piece -- if it's necessary it's there, and we'll cooperatively with our joint partners to ensure that we get the right people, right place, right time.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you. Let's go to Clyde. Please go ahead. Clyde? Okay.

David, do you have any follow-up questions? Okay.

Olivia, do you have any follow-on questions?

Q I just wanted to see -- do you anticipate -- as this effort is prolonged do you think that the Reserve will probably play a bigger role down the line?

GEN. STENNER: Well, I do think it'll be prolonged just because of the scope, and once the search and rescue phase is ultimately over there's a huge rebuilding and reconstitution phase that will have to take place. I believe our Reserve components will continue in a proportional manner to assist as we are doing today around the world and we're doing that in a manner that we can sustain. We can keep our citizen warriors working and that takes the support of the employers and it takes the support of the families. And that's another big piece of this right now -- the employers who are allowing folks to take time off to go down and assist in this effort. The quicker we can put it into a predictable and sustainable model with a rotational predictability, the better we'll be. But I do think it will be around for a while and I do know that we will participate as one of those three components in the Air Force with the specialties we have, especially in some of the aeromedical and the base-operating support, the expeditionary combat support like engineers and like communications and like security forces. So we'll be part of this effort for the long haul as long as it takes.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you. And then, Paul, you're last before we wrap up today's roundtable. Paul?

Q What about me? Q Okay.

LT. CRAGG: Oh, Chuck, I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to miss you. We'll get you, Chuck.

Paul, go ahead.

Q Okay. As people are being dropped off at Homestead and Charleston when they're brought back in from Haiti, what is being done with them? Are they being treated medically on the site if necessary? Are they being sent to hospitals in your local area over there? Or what's the process for bringing people back in?

GEN. STENNER: Yes. All of the above. We have -- there's a -- an entry point and those that are ambulatory are allowed to walk off the aircraft and taken to a holding point and then we have transportation and food and those kinds of things available. Those that aren't we have procedures to get them to hospitals and there's a flow set up there as well. And we are also in contact with the Miami- Dade County Emergency Operations Center. So this is not just a -- an overseas effort. This is -- when you look at the Miami-Dade County and the Homestead cooperative effort going on with the civilian community that too bodes well for longevity here and it serves us very well to have that relationship with the EOC there.

Q Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Okay. Chuck, go ahead, please.

Q Yes. General, Chuck Simmins from America's North Shore Journal again.

GEN. STENNER: Hi.

Q Hi. Can you give me some numbers of how many Reserve aircraft, how many airmen are currently involved in the Haiti mission?

GEN. STENNER: I can. As of this point, we've flown about 57 missions and that's been in the C-130, C-17, the MC-130. That's not an airlift mission, but we have flown some of those MC-130s.

We have taken the 82nd Airborne since our C-130s are the primary flying mission at Polk Air Force Base and Fort Bragg, the combination of Bragg and Polk there, we have delivered the 82nd Airborne in great numbers to Port-au-Prince right now, and that continues as we speak. We've had some KC-10 air refueling missions and some KC-135 missions and C-5 missions. Again, 57 total of those. We've gotten about a little short of 650,000 pounds of cargo, 137 pallets. We've moved 240 passengers into the country and those passengers have been of course workers, whether they be civilian agencies or whether they be military. And we've actually brought back about 1,600 American citizens back into

the States. We've got more crews that have been alerted and are ready to go. We've got quite a few volunteers that are out there right now and the tactical air lift control element that sat there is on stand by if we need it. We've got a 920 rescue wing helicopter crew that's standing by if necessary. And we've got about 150 or so other folks that are on call that aren't necessary right now but will likely be used in some of the follow on efforts here with aeromedical and the rest.

So we're heavily involved in just about every mission, especially the mobility fleet.

Q Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: With that, we're running to a close to the bloggers roundtable for today. So I'm going to turn the floor back over to General Stenner if you'd like to end with a closing thought, we'll wrap it up for today.

GEN. STENNER: Well first of all thanks very much for giving me the time. I'm really very, very proud of our Air Force Reserve airmen and the missions that they do and the fact that they are sustaining and maintaining that level of readiness that we as a three component Air Force need to seamlessly integrate and do missions that we do around the world. I know that each one of our members that are doing this are very proud to be participating especially in this humanitarian mission.

And anytime we have the chance to help alleviate the suffering and save the lives, it's absolutely in the best interest of the American citizen airmen. And along with our active duty partners, we are ready, we are trained to answer this nation's call whenever and whatever that may be for. I am personally very proud of the fact that when we are called on, we are trained and ready to do the missions that are necessary. And we can go very quickly with our partners.

I think America, this is another kind of a little microcosm of the fact that America is this kind of benevolent society and we have a lot of caring citizens and that's marked by the fact that as soon as I said earlier the TV shows that we have a problem, our folks are on the phone saying I'm ready to go. We've got 67,500 of those folks and they stand alongside all of the Americans and their employers, we can't forget them, that are continuing to support this effort, as well as the ones that have been before and the ones that come after. And I will reecho the president's pledge to the people of Haiti that we'll do this as long as it takes to ensure that we eliminate that suffering and help rebuild what needs to be rebuilt. So thank you all very much for what you do as well.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you sir and thank you for the bloggers. A note for everybody. You've been listening to Lieutenant General Charles E. Stenner, Jr., chief of the Air Force Reserve Command. To get a transcript or the audio file, simply go to www.dodlive.mil, click on the bloggers roundtable link and you'll find more information about this roundtable.

Thank you, everyone, and this concludes today's roundtable.

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